



President Mahinda Rajapaksa met with leading Indian film star Amitabh Bachchan, Brand Ambassador of the International Indian Film Academy (IIFA) at Janadhipathi Mandiraya (President's House) in Colombo this evening ( April 20).

Mr. Bachchan is in Colombo for the official launch of IIFA 2010, the largest annual event of Bollywood cinema which will be held in Colombo in June this year.

At the meeting which lasted 45 minutes, President Rajapaksa and Mr. Bachchan discussed aspects of the Indian and Sri Lankan film industries, with emphasis on developing good cinema of the whole sub-continent, combining the assets and talents of both India and Sri Lanka.

Mr. Bachchan was the guest of President and Madame Shiranthi Rajapaksa.

The Bollywood legend told the President that of all the welcomes he had received over the past 10 years with IIFA, the reception he had received in Sri Lanka was by far the very best. He was also very appreciative of the opportunities for film production available in Sri Lanka, in the current situation of peace and stability that prevails in the country.

President Rajapaksa said the Government was keen to develop the Sri Lanka film industry and saw many possibilities of partnership with India in this regard. Mr. Bachchan was impressed by the work already done in establishing the Mahinda Rajapaksa National Tele-Cinema Park, at Tissamaharama, which is a brainchild of the President.

Mr. Bachchan and President Rajapaksa were agreed on the need and possibility of building bridges of understanding through the cinema, and the Indian star said he was struck by the integration of the Sinhala, Tamil and Muslim cultures in the welcome dance forms that he saw, which showed the peoples' desire to live in peace and harmony. He was also very positive on the prospects of tourism development in Sri Lanka.

The Sri Lankan President and Mr. Bachchan also discussed cricket which both of them follow keenly, and Mr. Bachchan said he was struck by the very good performance of all Sri Lankan players in the current IPL series. President Rajapaksa said that part of this success was the encouragement given by to rural youth to participate in cricket and intentional sports by the Government.

Also present at the meeting were Mr. Lalith Weeratunga, Secretary to the President, Mr. Gamini Senarath, Additional Secretary to the President, Mr. Ajith Nivard Cabraal, Governor of the Central Bank, Mr. George Michael, Secretary, Ministry of Tourism, Mr. W. B. Ganegala,

Secretary Ministry of Media and Information, acclaimed film stars of Sri Lanka Malani Fonseka and Ravindra Randeniya and Ms. Jacqueline Fernandez, a former Miss Sri Lanka; and Mr. Joseph Sabbas and Ms. Shefani Munshi, of Wizcraft Enterprises International of India.